

FRANKFORD ARSENAL, Building 106
South of Tacony Street between Bridge
Street and the tracks of the former
Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-74D

HAER
PA,
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693-D-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Frankford Arsenal, Building 106

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Location: South of Tacony Street between Bridge Street and the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

UTM: NW: E494120N4428480
NE: E494780 N4428750
SE: E495120 N4428260
SW: E494190 NEE28140

Quad: Frankford

Date of Construction: 1816-1976

Present Owner: Arsenal Associates
P.O. Box 26767
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Present Use: Vacant, industrial, offices

Significance: Established in 1816, the Frankford Arsenal served for three decades as a depot for the storage and repair of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition for the United States Army. From 1849 to 1976, the arsenal served as the nation's principal developer and manufacturer of small arms and artillery munitions. Frankford Arsenal pioneered mechanized production of munitions and developed numerous important innovations in ordnance and precision instruments. Technological innovations introduced at Frankford Arsenal made important contributions to the mechanization of American industry and the implementation of interchangeability and mass production techniques.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in August 1988 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement among the General Services Administration, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of several buildings at Frankford Arsenal.

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Building 106, a small arms ammunition shop and fire department, was constructed in 1820 as a storehouse for gun carriages and artillery pieces. Although greatly enlarged, heavily altered, and relocated, the building retains portions of the oldest storage facility constructed at Frankford Arsenal.

Building 106 originally measured 147 feet by 35 feet and consisted of little more than a series of brick piers supporting a gabled roof. Double doors between the piers provided protection from the weather and security for the gun carriages and artillery pieces stored in the building's thirteen bays or stalls.

Between August 1918 and April 1919, the building was remodeled and moved a short distance to its present site. This work, which entailed the installation of wood frame panels in the spaces between the original brick piers, was associated with the building's conversion into a storehouse. In 1941, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed a 133-foot-long addition to the west end of the building. This work, which included a new slate roof for the entire building, cost \$36,700. In June 1941, the post fire department moved into the eastern end of Building 106.

In 1942, the western portion of the building was remodeled for use as small arms ammunition shop. This work included the introduction of new window openings, the construction of offices, toilet rooms and other facilities, and the erection of a small switch room attached to the building's south facade. The total cost of this work amounted to \$45,700.

In 1944, the building was again remodeled, at a cost of \$25,100, to accommodate new package testing equipment. This equipment included rooms and devices, including a horizontal catapult, designed to test the resistance of ammunition packaging to heat, humidity, water, impact and other adverse conditions. Living quarters for the post firemen were constructed in the east end of the building in 1946. In 1952, a new brick and masonry addition was constructed at the northeast corner of the building to house the firemen's quarters and offices. This addition, built at a cost of \$24,300, has reinforced concrete floors and foundations and a concrete slab roof.

At present, the single-story brick building rests on concrete foundations and measures approximately 280 feet by 35 feet. It has a gabled roof, covered in slate, with a wood cornice and ten ventilators located along the ridge line. A single-story, flat-roofed brick firemen's quarters, measuring approximately 29 feet by 68 feet, is attached to the northeast corner of the building and a single-story, shed-roofed, brick switch room, measuring approximately 8 feet by 18 feet, is attached to the south facade. The building's interior is divided into a number of irregular rooms. A mortise-and-tenon king post roof truss is visible in the attic.

Although altered, enlarged, and moved, Building 106 incorporates portions of the oldest surviving storage facility at Frankford Arsenal. Built in 1820 as a storehouse for gun carriages and artillery pieces, the building is associated with the earliest period of the arsenal, and the post's function as a storage depot.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Milner Associates, "Historical and Archeological Survey of Frankford Arsenal," West Chester, PA: John Milner Associates, 1979.

Report prepared for the Department of the Army, Baltimore District, Corps of Engineers, Baltimore, Maryland. Copies on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

For complete overview of site, see HAER No. PA-74.

